## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSMENT OF UNDISCOVERED OIL AND GAS RESOURCES

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#### **PURPOSE**

This annotated bibliography was intended to be a useful reference for those engaged in assessing undiscovered oil and gas resources. As such, it is an update of Charpentier and Wesley (1986).

The bibliography includes only papers dealing with resource appraisal methods for undiscovered oil and gas resources. Thus it does not include those that deal with minerals other than oil and gas, nor those that merely present assessments, rather than explain methodology. The papers included deal only with quantitative assessment of undiscovered or inferred resources; therefore papers dealing with non-quantitative methodologies or with quantifying measured or proven reserves are excluded. Papers concerning quantitative measures of drilling favorability, not directly leading to measures of quantity of resources, are also excluded. Inevitably, decisions to include or exclude papers have been somewhat subjective, but we have attempted to be inclusive where there was some question.

The papers have been annotated to show which of the major categories of assessment methods are treated in each. Since many methods combine the use of techniques in multiple categories, the annotation is also subjective in places. In a few cases, relevant papers discussed more general features of resource appraisal rather than specific methods and were therefore labeled "General."

#### **METHOD CATEGORIES**

## Areal and volumetric yields

Areal and volumetric yield methods calculate resources by multiplying the area or volume of rock to be assessed by a yield factor of hydrocarbons per unit area or volume calculated from analogs. Differences between these methods are due to differences in how the prospective areas and volumes are calculated and also in how a particular factor or range of factors is chosen. In the latter case, the factors may be chosen based on geologic classification of the area, by calculation, or by judgment of geologic similarity. Unit regional values, when calculated specifically for hydrocarbon

resources, fall into this category. The required data include measurements of areas or volumes of rock to be assessed and calculated yield factors for more completely explored analogs.

A major assumption is that geologic or other information can be used to determine a suitable yield factor or range of yield factors. Another assumption is that the analog yield factors used are themselves appropriately calculated. Since any analog area will be incompletely explored, either the analog is assumed to be at a sufficiently mature stage, or the analog yield is calculated from estimates of both discovered and undiscovered resources. This approach could result in circular reasoning in the appraisal process.

The primary advantage of the areal and volumetric yield methods is the ease in assembling data for a target appraisal area. Little needs to be known about the target area other than area or volume of sedimentary rock. However, the more that is known about the geology, the easier and arguably better (supposedly) is the determination of an appropriate yield factor. Much of the work, actually, is in compiling suitable analog yields, which must be done at the same scale (basin, play) as the target. The primary disadvantage lies in the difficulty in assigning appropriate yield factors even when the geology is very well known. The relationship between yield factor and the many underlying geologic factors is obviously very complex, so appraisals done by this method are likely to be cruder than those done by methods that more directly involve more of the geologic constraints. The calculations may serve as an appropriate check, however, on appraisals done by other methods.

Major references include Hendricks (1965, 1974), Jones (1975), Mallory (1975a), Ulmishek and Harrison (1984), and Weeks (1965, 1966a).

#### **Field-size distributions**

The assumption of an underlying distribution of field sizes can be used to generate estimates. Given an assumed distribution (for example, lognormal or Pareto) and the sizes of discovered fields, sizes of undiscovered fields can be estimated. Considerably more data is required than for areal or volumetric yield calculations. Sizes of discovered fields (or reservoirs, if done on that scale) are necessary. Since a substantial number of fields (at least 20?) are needed to give a reasonable fit of the data to a distribution, this is inappropriate for nonproducing or immature plays.

The major assumption of a particular analysis by this method is the choice of which distribution to use. Field distributions are clearly skewed, having few large fields and many smaller ones, but whether there is a modal size (as in a lognormal distribution) or whether the number of small fields continues to increase with decreasing size (as in a Pareto distribution) is the subject of considerable debate.

For mature areas with a sufficiently large number of discoveries, the field-size distribution is usually fairly well behaved and this method can give good results. Generally, though, the inclusion of discovery order information in a discovery process model improves the results even more. In any case, exploration constraints can in some cases have significant impact on the results if not accounted for separately. Since a large number of discovered fields is required, this method is inappropriate for hypothetical or immature plays. The quality of the assessment also relies on the quality of the sizes of discovered fields, which should probably be grown to ultimate size. The difficulty in doing so may impact the assessment quality.

Major references include Harbaugh and Ducastaing (1981), Houghton (1988), Howarth and others (1980), Kaufman (1963), Klemme (1983, 1984), McCrossan (1969), Riesz (1978), and Schuenemeyer and Drew (1983).

## Historical extrapolation

Historical extrapolation methods relate discovery data to order of discovery, to time, or to some measure of exploratory effort. One such method is the analysis of the number of discoveries per unit time or effort, extrapolated into the future using some mathematical function. Discovery process modeling is even more complex in that it extrapolates both numbers and sizes of accumulations from the past into the future. Data requirements are either the order of discovery of the deposits or their discovery dates, depending on the particular method used. A measure of the exploratory effort with time (for example, the number of wildcat wells drilled per year) and the sizes of the accumulations are also required for some of the methods.

An underlying model of discovery requires the assumption of some particular mathematical function for extrapolation into the future. In discovery process modeling, the assumption of a particular field-size distribution may also be required.

As in field-size distribution methods, sufficiently large data sets are usually well behaved, but exploration constraints must be separately accounted for. Again, since a

large number of discovered accumulations is required, this method is inappropriate for hypothetical or immature plays.

Major references include Arps and Roberts (1958), Barouch and Kaufman (1976a, b), Drew (1975a), Drew and others (1980), Hubbert (1967), Kaufman and others (1975), Meisner and Demiren (1981), Moore (1966a), Root and Drew (1979), Root and Schuenemeyer (1980), J.T. Ryan (1973a), and Zapp (1962).

## Deposit modeling

Deposit modeling involves a volumetric model of individual prospects or groups of prospects. The methods consist of generating and then combining estimates of the number of undiscovered deposits and estimates of the sizes of undiscovered deposits. Often the estimates of sizes of undiscovered deposits are calculated using geologic data, such as structure sizes, reservoir thicknesses, and porosities, in a volumetric equation. The deposit size estimates may also come directly from analog deposit size data or from a combination of deposit size and historical data by way of a discovery process model. Risk is likely to be assessed separately. This method is often referred to as play analysis, but can be done at a variety of scales. Data requirements are relatively heavy, depending particularly on what variables are used to calculate the accumulation sizes.

In most of the methods of this category, assumptions must be made about dependence among variables (both size variables and risk elements).

For geologist appraisers, this method has the advantage of dealing with the sorts of data with which a geologist is most comfortable: sizes of structures, reservoir thicknesses, porosities, etc. Some variables, such as trap fill, are very difficult to assess, however. Much data is needed and, when volumetric equations for accumulation size are used, there are serious questions about dependence among variables. Perhaps the largest disadvantage is a tendency to not adequately cover hypothetical plays.

Major references include Baker and others (1984), Bird (1984b), Energy, Mines and Resources Canada (1977), Lee and Wang (1983a, b), Miller (1981, 1982a), Procter and Taylor (1984), and L.P. White (1981).

## Organic geochemical mass balance

The organic geochemical mass balance or material balance approach (volume genetic approach of the Russian literature) begins by assessing an amount of generated hydrocarbon then modifying that amount to estimate amounts migrated, leaked and

eventually trapped. Data requirements are particularly large and difficult to fulfill. Much quantitative geochemical data is required.

Assumptions include not only those related to the geochemistry of hydrocarbon generation, but also the assumption that all the significant source rocks have been identified and adequately analyzed and characterized.

This method has the advantage of dealing with the fundamental geologic processes in oil and gas occurrence by following the temporal progression of the hydrocarbon generation, migration, and accumulation. Sufficient geochemical data may appropriately constrain the estimate of generated hydrocarbons for those source rocks examined. However, the quantitative proportioning of generated hydrocarbons being expelled, leaked, dispersed, or trapped is presently very poorly understood. The proportion of trapped hydrocarbon seems to be a low percent of that generated, and small changes in the efficiencies of migration or entrapment result in large changes in the estimates of trapped hydrocarbons. This method is most useful in frontier areas where there is little constraining information available from discovery histories and as a qualitative approach to help investigate scenarios of hydrocarbon history and distribution. A further disadvantage of this method is the relatively large amount of work needed to assemble and analyze data.

Major references include Bishop and others (1983), Conybeare (1965), Kontorovich (1950, 1976, 1984), and Neruchev (1964).

#### Direct expert assessment

Direct expert assessment is sometimes called direct subjective assessment. Methods in this category include Delphi conferences. As all assessments must be based on some sorts of constraints, these methods are actually indirect in that they rely on other methods, either explicitly or implicitly. The open structure allows such methods to be used for assessments based on any amount of data, large or small.

Direct expert assessment has few constraints, and thus few underlying assumptions other than general geologic theories of petroleum occurrence that are shared by all the methods.

Because the assessor or assessors are not tightly constrained, there is more room for assessor bias to enter into the assessment. Effectiveness depends, to a large extent, on the knowledge and objectivity of the individual assessor(s). On the other hand, the lack of constraints, allows the assessor(s) to take into account special situations such as

exploration constraints that are poorly handled by more mechanical methods. The particular strength of direct assessment methods is its ability to synthesize disparate information and the results of more mechanical methods and to modify them to account for the particulars of specific subject areas.

Major references include Baxter and others (1978), Dolton (1984), Dolton and others (1981), Houghton and others (1993), Ivanhoe (1986a), and Miller and others (1975).

#### OTHER ANNOTATIONS

#### Mathematical tools

A number of statistical and mathematical techniques as well as a number of computer programs have been developed to assist and perform resource appraisals. Included here are probabilistic methods to calculate estimates, either using Monte Carlo techniques or more direct equations. Also included are techniques to aggregate estimates of smaller areas into estimates for larger areas or to disaggregate estimates of larger areas into estimates for smaller areas.

Major references include Crovelli (1981, 1985b), and Crovelli and Balay (1986, 1990a).

## Reserve growth/confirmation

The methods discussed previously were for assessing undiscovered accumulations of oil or gas. A related problem is the estimation of resources in discovered fields beyond what is currently proven. This quantity is the difference between the presently known accumulation size (cumulative production plus proved reserves) and the ultimate size of the field at exhaustion. Calculation of inferred resources for an individual field is an engineering calculation not treated in this bibliography. Inferred resources, however, can also be estimated at an aggregate level and such methods are included in this category. Especially in maturely explored areas, the amount of inferred resources can exceed the amount of undiscovered resources.

Major references include Arrington (1960), Attanasi and Root (1994), Mast and Dingler (1975), Root (1981), and Root and Mast (1993).

#### Quantitative characterization of undiscovered resources

Besides just the size, quantitative estimation of other aspects of undiscovered resources is also of interest. Most common of these are economic models based on the geologic characterization. Other methods may characterize the undiscovered accumulations geologically, for example by depth.

Major references include Attanasi and others (1993), Attanasi and Haynes (1984), Baturin and others (1990), Bugg and others (1988), and Sverchkov and Ivanova (1985).

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#### **SOLICITATION**

The utility of a resource such as this bibliography depends to a large extent on its completeness. No author or small group of authors can be aware of every reference for any but the most narrow of topics. In the interest of future updates to this bibliography we therefore solicit contributions of omitted references. Please contact any of the authors at:

U.S. Geological Survey Box 25046, DFC, MS 940 Denver, Colorado 80225, U.S.A.

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